

Members

Sen. James Merritt, Chairperson
Sen. David Ford
Sen. Allie Craycraft
Sen. James Lewis
Rep. Terry Goodin, Vice-Chairperson
Rep. Robert Bischoff
Rep. Phyllis Pond
Rep. William Ruppel



STATE FAIR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Authority: IC 15-1-1.5-4

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: October 8, 2004
Meeting Time: 11:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage (The Barn), 1201 E. 38th Street,
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 2

Members Present: Sen. James Merritt, Chairperson; Sen. David Ford; Sen. James Lewis; Rep. Robert Bischoff; Rep. Phyllis Pond; Rep. William Ruppel.

Members Absent: Rep. Terry Goodin, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Allie Craycraft.

Chairperson Merritt called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Because November's gubernatorial election may cause a change of party in that office, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Mr. William Stinson, the Executive Director of the State Fair Commission, for all his work towards the Fair. Chairperson Merritt stated that if there is a change, he hoped that the Committee would meet him again. Mr. Stinson expressed his gratitude and respect for the Committee.

1. 2004 Indiana State Fair

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Mr. Stinson gave the Committee the Indiana State Fair Advisory Committee-2004 Update (Exhibit A) and the 2003 Annual Report of the Indiana State Fair Commission (Exhibit B). This is the first year that attendance has broken 900,000, and six out of the twelve days of the Fair set attendance records for that particular day. The days of the Fair were the mildest in memory, if not ever; some nights were so cool that people left because of the chill. The Fair promoted transportation alternatives and many people took the shuttle buses from Glendale Center and the Major Taylor Velodrome. In response to Chairperson Merritt, Mr. Stinson responded that the Fall Creek Parkway project is finished, but the 2005 and 2006 Fairs will have to deal with repairs to 38th Street. Mr. Stinson was not certain of the final accounting for the 2004 Fair, but expected to make somewhat less profit than the near \$900,000 profit of 2003.

The challenge in this and in coming years, according to Mr. Stinson, is the conflict that the Fair has with school schedules. The Fair traditionally has started beginning the third Wednesday before Labor Day. Therefore, this year's date of August 11 is the latest possible starting date for the Fair. However, schools are starting earlier and earlier in August, partly to provide for instruction for the ISTEP tests held in the fall. The Fair cannot be held any earlier in the summer because the exhibits come from county fairs, which are held just before the Fair. If entire families cannot attend, the gross proceeds will fall. Responding to Senator Ford, Mr. Stinson stated that the Illinois Fair is run by groups of appointees who replace each other; continuity cannot be maintained and that Fair's attendance suffers. Mr. Stinson was also aware that the Nebraska Fair is suffering a decline, but did not know what has caused the problem. Over the years, there has been talk that perhaps the Indiana Fair should be moved to a more rural location, but the Fair has led to the revitalization of the 38th Street corridor.

Representative Bischoff asked about the Grandstand revenue. Mr. Stinson explained that the cost of the Reba McEntire concert exceeded its revenues. In retrospect, perhaps the tickets for her show should have cost more, because her die-hard fans were the ones who attended. He explained that the booking process is certainly not an exact science -- the acts that are selected in the preceding fall may not be so popular at the time of the Fair. The Fair is competing for acts and for entertainment dollars with Verizon Wireless Music Center, Conseco Fieldhouse, and now The Lawn at White River State Park.

Representative Ruppel believed that what has brought patrons in is the emphasis on family entertainment. He stated that he was glad to see Representative Greg Porter, Chair of the House Education Committee in attendance; he felt that schools used to give at least a day off to visit the Fair and count it as an educational trip. Representative Ruppel was concerned that sometimes rural students are not able to exhibit at the Fair due to absence from school; many times, these children are scholastically better students. Representative Pond added that in earlier times the student had to prove the attendance at the Fair for it to be an excused absence. Discussion ensued regarding individual members' willingness to contact the Superintendent of Public Instruction concerning this topic.

After Mr. Stinson concluded his presentation by stating that the Fair is on solid ground, Senator Ford began a discussion about the Farm Progress Show. In earlier years, the Show rotated between Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa but is no longer held in Indiana. The Show needs a location where buildings can be built for the Show, and crops can be grown to be used for demonstrating farm machinery. Senator Ford thought that the Grissom Air Base property might be an ideal location for an Indiana show. Mr. Stinson stated the Prairie Farmer magazine owns the Show, but that he could contact its staff and find out why the Show was moved and discuss a move back to Indiana.

2. Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage

Chairperson Merritt thanked Betsy Jones, the Executive Director of the Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage (The Barn), for hosting the Committee's meeting. Ms. Jones introduced George Morton, Dr. Dick Jones, Dr. Judy Jordan, and Gary Truitt, members of The Barn's Board of Directors, and Representative Greg Porter, a member of The Barn's Board of Trustees. Also introduced were Justin Armstrong, The Barn's Education Specialist, and Angie Foreman, its Farm Market Manager and Special Events Coordinator. Ms. Jones provided the Committee with a folder from The Barn with minutes of past meetings, the July 2004 through June 2005 budget, an income statement for the same period, and other items of publicity (Exhibit C). She stated that currently the main focus of The Barn is programming.

Mr. Armstrong told the Committee about The Barn's plans for distance learning in conjunction with the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration. A fiber optic network is allowing The Barn to furnish agriculturally based educational programs all over the world. The Barn's presenter and its viewers can watch each other and interact in real time; it is just like being in a classroom. He stated that there are not a great many agriculturally based programs available to the public and so Indiana is in the forefront in this regard.

Ms. Foreman invited everyone in attendance to the Normandy Festival to be held on October 9 and noted that the event is free to the public this year. She spoke about the success of the Farmer's Market this year, and said that another Urban Garden is planned for next year.

Ms. Jones stated that the Indiana Livestock Breeders have donated their archival material to The Barn. She expressed her appreciation for the assistance to The Barn from the Committee.

3. Further Remarks

Representative Porter stated that he is excited about the changes coming to the Mapleton-Fall Creek area, and noted that The Barn is a wonderful facility for a wonderful neighborhood. He stated that he is glad to be a Trustee and that he hoped The Barn would be a facility that all Hoosiers can enjoy.

Chairperson Merritt adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.